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Read a little

Poetry by Miss M. McGregor.

• LIBRETTO •

OF

RUTH • •

AND

• • NAOMI • •

A MUSICAL DRAMA IN 3 ACTS.

BY

J. A. BUTTERFIELD,

AUTHOR OF "BELSHAZZAR," ETC.

THE LIBRETTO, ARGUMENT, SCENES AND DRAMATIC ACTION,
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RUTH AND NAOMI.

Dramatis Personæ.

RUTH, - - - - -	SOPRANO.	ZULEIKA, - - - - -	SOPRANO.
NAOMI, - - - - -	ALTO.	PROPHETESS, - - - - -	ALTO.
BOAZ, - - - - -	TENOR.	ORPAH, - - - - -	MEZ. SOP.
NEAR KINSMAN, - - - - -	BASS.	MERAB, - - - - -	TENOR.
HIGH PRIEST, - - - - -	BASS.	BOAZ'S HEAD SERVANT,	BARITONE.

Chorus of Reapers and Gleaners, Companion Maidens of Ruth, Elders of the People, Citizens of Bethlehem, Servants of Boaz, Officiating Priests, Maidens with Tabrets and Harps, Herald, etc.

The leading incidents are taken from the Book of Ruth, but owing to the fact that the customs of the age were wholly at variance with those of our day, we have refrained from giving an exact portraiture in every respect, preserving sufficient accuracy, however, to render the story truthful in general outline. We have no hesitation in reproducing the story of Ruth as a musical drama, when we recollect that the incidents are simply historical and preserved only for the purpose of showing the genealogical descent of our Saviour from Boaz. The action is laid in and near Bethlehem about the year 1320 B. C.

THE ARGUMENT.

Naomi and her family emigrate to the country of Moab, on account of a severe famine existing in the land of Judah. The family consists of Naomi, her husband Elimelech, and her two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. They dwell in Moab about ten years, during which time Elimelech dies, and the sons take wives of that country, Mahlon marrying Ruth, and Chilion espousing Orpah. The two sons die also, and the three women are left widows. During the ten years' absence of Naomi, the land of Judah has again become prosperous, and hearing of this, she resolves to return to her former home. She leaves Moab, and her two daughters-in-law accompany her. As they near the old homestead, now going to decay, Naomi thanks them for their kindness to her, blesses them, and urges them to return to the land of Moab. Without hesitation they decide to share their fortunes with her, though Orpah, after some persuasion, is induced to return to her kindred; Ruth however "clave unto Naomi," and would not forsake her. They reach Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest, and as they are in destitute circumstances, Ruth volunteers to go into the fields to glean, as was the custom of women in that age, if poverty rendered it necessary to earn their own bread, special provision being made for such by the Israelitish law. Without being aware of any relationship, Ruth chanced to glean in the field belonging to Boaz, a wealthy relative of Elimelech. One day on coming from Bethlehem he observed her, and after making many inquiries of his head servant as to her country and kindred, he ordered his servants

to show her special attention, by letting her glean wherever she might choose, and even allowing handfuls of corn to fall on purpose for her. Boaz was a near relative of Elimelech's, and the marriage law of Israel stood thus: that the brother or nearest living male relative should marry the deceased brother's widow. This relative, who is styled the Near Kinsman, had become jealous of the wealth and popularity of Boaz, and was seeking an opportunity to redress fancied grievances, being instigated by his old servant Merab. His wife Zuleika had become jealous of Ruth on account of the custom just mentioned, and was determined to frustrate any plans with a view to such a marriage. Thus matters stood: Poor Ruth was laboring hard daily in the harvest fields, earning barely sufficient to support herself and Naomi; Boaz was becoming enamored of Ruth: the Near Kinsman was getting desperate and resolved to wreak his vengeance on the unoffending Boaz at the first favorable opportunity. One evening as Ruth returns from the fields she becomes conscious of a growing attachment to Boaz. Naomi overhearing this, secretly rejoices, and in order to bring the affair to a crisis resolves to place Ruth in his way on the first favorable occasion, therefore suggests to her to go down to the threshing-floor where Boaz and his servants are celebrating the harvest home, but not to make herself known until after the festivities. Ever true and faithful, she replies: "All thou sayest unto me I will do." She goes down to the floor as directed, and as she is about to awaken Boaz, who had by this time retired to rest, lying down at the "end of the heap of corn," she hears a step, and almost before she has time to resolve how to act she is horrified to see the Near Kinsman enter stealthily, with evident murderous designs. With sufficient presence of mind, however, she drops back into the gloom before being discovered, and watches with intense anxiety the approach of the Near Kinsman to Boaz. His dagger leaps from its hiding-place, his arm is raised, but Ruth, nerved to desperation, glides rapidly forward and arrests it just as it is in the act of drinking the life-blood of his kinsman Boaz. The Near Kinsman realizing the desperate nature of the situation sues on bended knees for pardon. It is granted after an earnest supplication from Ruth, on condition that he yield his claim to her hand, which he does, and makes genuine efforts of repentance.

Naomi determines to sell the parcel of land which belonged to her husband, Elimelech, and Boaz is intrusted with its sale. At the gate or entrance to the city of Bethlehem was the place for the people to regulate all matters of public interest. Boaz, therefore, assembles together ten men of the elders of the city, and with characteristic generosity, in order to spare the feelings of the Near Kinsman, offers him the land, informing him at the same time, however, that he who makes the purchase must also espouse Ruth. He excuses himself from purchasing for the reason that he would "mar his own inheritance." This public act releases him from the obligation, and enables Boaz to purchase the land and legally to claim the hand of Ruth. Soon afterward the companion maidens of Ruth assemble at nightfall at the house of Naomi, according to custom, and sing the Epithalamium or nuptial ode of congratulation, which was followed in a few days by the wedding.

"Ruth and Naomi."

"Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephraim-ites of Bethlehem-judah : and they came into the country of Moab and continued there." (RUTH, chap. i, v. 1 and 2.)

INTRODUCTION AND SCENE.

The Exile's Farewell.

The stage represents the deserted home of the family of Elimelech, Naomi lingering behind loth to leave the old homestead. A Shepherd's pipe is heard in the distance.

NAOMI.

My native land, Farewell !
I leave thee with a bursting heart,
A throbbing brow, and moistened eye.
Thy rocks and thy vales,
Thy hills and thy dales,
Farewell, Farewell !
The birth-place of my children
(Young men now stalwart grown,)
Each flower and tree,
All, all that I love,
Farewell !
Brave Elimelech awaits my departure,
And Mahlon and Chilion are impatient,
One last fond look. Farewell !

Farewell my dear old home,
Exiled from thee I roam ;
We seek a stranger strand,
Far from our native land ;
Farewell each tree and flower,
Dear in this parting hour,
Dearer than heart can tell,
How sad to say, Farewell !

(*A voice behind scenes.*)

Naomi ! Naomi ! Naomi !

NAOMI !

My husband grows impatient,
And he I may not tell
How hard it is to say the word,
This last sad word, Farewell !

Farewell to every sod,
Farewell the paths I've trod ;
One look with bursting heart,
One glance and then we part ;
They call, and I arise,
Yet with my streaming eyes
One look o'er hill and dell,
Dear land, loved home : Farewell !

Act I.

SCENE I.—*Harvest Time.*

The Reapers and Gleaners are proceeding to the fields in charge of the Head Servant of Boaz. Ten years have elapsed since the Introductory Scene, and Naomi's old home shows signs of neglect and decay.

REAPERS AND GLEANERS.

Away to the fields, to the barley fields
away,
For the golden sun hath kissed them
brown :
Away to the fields nor the harvest home
delay,
And our labor's end with joy we'll crown.

HEAD SERVANT.

Come away, come away,
Let us hie to the fields away,
Soon the moon will pass away.

CHORUS.

Away to the fields, etc.

SCENE II.—*The Plotters.*

Merab, afterward Near Kinsman. Merab has just returned from Moab, whither he has been sent by his master.

MERAB.

All things have an ending,
And so hath this journey.
Hungry, weary, and footsore,
Beside this rock I'll rest me !
From Bethlehem to Moab,
And again from Moab to Bethlehem,
Have I journeyed many days,
Yet once again my native hills I see.
My master seems expectant,
But the tale with which I'm freighted
Will glad his inmost soul
As I unload the burden ;
And though 'tis full of sorrow,
To him it bringeth joy.
Perhaps to meet me here
He moveth on thus cautiously,
My fast then will I break.

The Near Kinsman expecting the return of his servant from Moab, and anxious for the news, hastens to meet him. At first he does not perceive him.

NEAR KINSMAN.

Ten years ago this ruined spot
Its happy inmates gladness brought ;
Then famine that with horror spread,
And pestilence with giant tread
Stalked forth victorious at noonday,
Like Israel's hosts seen in the fray !
Ah ! Merab ! what news I pray ?

MERAB.

Ten years have many changes wrought,
Sad news from Moab's land I've bro't.
Sad news—Naomi's left alone,
Her husband, children, all are gone.

BOTH.

So ^{he} the nearest one of kin,
Her own inheritance will win !

NEAR KINSMAN.

And Boaz, should he protest make,
Will surely feel my wrath and hate ;
Then why a longer time delay,
But set our plans to win the day.

BOTH

Silence and courage ne'er disown,
And soon will see the prize our own.

SCENE III.—*The Kinsmen.*

Near Kinsman, afterward Boaz. Head Servant. Reapers and Gleaners.

NEAR KINSMAN.

But what intruder comes this way ?
'Tis Boaz, who, with mighty sway
And lordly air, walks forth at morn,
Like chanticleer who hails the dawn.

BOAZ.

Work, boys, work,
There's wealth in honest labor.
Work, boys, work,
What's manlier than toil ?
Work, boys, work,
Let ev'ry friend and neighbor
Shout loud huzzah !
For the sons who work the soil !

NEAR KINSMAN.

Peace be unto my lord,
And unto my lord's household.
Let thy servant come near, I pray thee,
And speak a word in the ear of my
master !

BOAZ.

Arise ! Be thou blessed of Jehovah,
And may the blessing of the Lord God
of Israel be upon thee.
Speak ! Are we not brethren ?

NEAR KINSMAN.

Nay, my lord ! I am but a servant
Before the face of my master,
And dwell in tents,
While my lord hath many flocks and
herds.

BOAZ.

Nay ! but we are brethren
And dwell in peace,
And the land upon which we dwell,
Was it not given our father Abraham
For an inheritance to him and to his
seed forever ?
Therefore we are kinsmen. Arise !

HEAD SERVANT, REAPERS AND GLEAN-
ERS.

Work, boys, work.
There's health where sunlight's falling.
Work, boys, work !
What's purer than the breeze !
Work, boys, work !

Nor fear an honest calling,
 Toil's no disgrace,
 'Tis the hand each prize will seize.
 Soon goes the day and soon its toil is
 ended,
 Soon comes the night, with ills we've
 done unended.
 Then let our lives to highest aims be
 given,
 And thus point our footsteps the way
 that leads to heaven.

BOAZ WITH CHORUS.

(*Ensemble.*)

Work, boys, work !
 There's power in honest labor.
 Work, boys, work !
 For life's a hardy school.
 Work, boys, work !
 Nor ask of friend or neighbor.
 Then shout huzzah !
 For the sons of toil shall rule !
 Labor bringeth us pleasure.
 To nobly strive will teach ;
 Ever onward and upward,
 The motto set for each.

NEAR KINSMAN AND MERAB.

Work, boys, work !
 Ye who believe in labor.
 Work, boys, work !
 Yes, life's a hardy school.
 Work, boys, work !
 But as for yonder neighbor
 Who shouts huzza !
 We'll quickly see who'll rule !
 Labor may bring pleasure,
 To him whose gold is won,
 But we will take our leisure,
 Nor toil from sun to sun !

SCENE IV.—*The Exile's Return.*

Naomi, Ruth and Orpah.

"And Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died ; and she was left and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab ; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other was Ruth ; and they dwelt there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also ; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband. Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab, how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread." RUTH, chap. i. v. 3, 4, 5 and 6.

NAOMI.

Go, return ye, each to her mother's
 house :

The Lord deal kindly with you,
 As ye have dealt with the dead, and
 with me.

Jehovah grant you that ye may find rest
 Each of you in the house of her hus-
 band.

"Then she kissed them ; and they lifted up their voice
 and wept."—RUTH, chap. i. v. 9.

RUTH.

The Lord forbid,
 We can not do this thing !

ORPAH.

Surely we will return with thee
 Unto thy people.

NAOMI.

Turn again, my daughters ;
 For it grieveth me much for your sakes,
 That the hand of the Lord
 Is gone out against me.

"And they lifted up their voices and wept again : and
 Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto
 her."—RUTH, chap. i. v. 14.

RUTH, ORPAH AND NAOMI.

While earth is yet our home,
 The dearest ties are broken ;
 The words we spake by night,
 To-morrow are unspoken.
 The music of our life,
 Of heaven that seemed a token,
 Comes back when years are gone,
 But nevermore unbroken.
 And friend may part from friend,
 Each other's path not knowing ;
 To-day may bring us joy,
 To-morrow tears be flowing.
 The hour so sad draws nigh
 When trusting hearts must sever,
 Yet timid steps shall lead
 Where parting cometh never.

ORPAH.

Farewell !

RUTH AND NAOMI.

Farewell !

SCENE V.—*Constancy.*

Naomi and Ruth.

NAOMI.

Behold ! thy sister hath gone back
 Unto her people, and unto her gods.
 Return thou after thy sister-in-law !

RUTH.

Entreat me not to leave thee,
Or to return from following after thee :
For whither thou goest, I will go ;
And where thou lodgest, I will lodge ;
Thy people shall be my people,
And thy God my God.
Where thou diest, will I die,
And there will I be buried.
The Lord do so to me, and more also,
If aught but death part thee and me.

SCENE VI.—*The Sacrifice.*

The people returning from the ancient Jewish ceremony of offering the first sheaf of barley. The High Priest, with several officiating priests in attendance, maidens with tabrets, and others with cymbals and harps, the Prophetess, Head Servant, and people of Bethlehem.

ALL.

It is a good thing to give thanks
Unto the Lord ; and to sing praises
Unto thy name, O Most Highest !
To tell of thy loving kindness
Early in the morning,
And of thy truth in the night season.
Upon an instrument of ten strings,
And upon the lute.
Upon a loud instrument and upon the harp.
For thou, Lord, hast made me glad
through thy works,
And I will rejoice in giving praise
For the operations of thy hands.

HIGH PRIEST.

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving,
And into his courts with praise,
Be thankful unto him and bless his name.
For the Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting,
And his truth endureth to all generations.

HIGH PRIEST, PROPHETESS, HEAD SERV-
ANT AND CHORUS.

It is a good thing to give thanks, etc.

SCENE VII.—*The Recognition.*

Ruth, Naomi, High Priest, Head Servant, Prophetess,
and people of Bethlehem.

"And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them ; and they said, is this Naomi ?"—RUTH, chap. i, v. 19.

HIGH PRIEST.

(*Recognizing Naomi.*)

Is this Naomi ?
Wife of our brother Elimelech ?

ALL.

Is this Naomi ? Is this Naomi ?

NAOMI.

Call me not Naomi,
But henceforth call me Mara,
For the Lord hath dealt very bitterly
with me ;
And the Almighty hath afflicted me.
Then why call ye me Naomi,
Seeing the Lord hath testified against me,
And the Almighty hath afflicted me ?

SCENE VIII.—*The Supplication.*

Finale to Act I.

Ruth, Naomi, Prophetess, Head Servant, High Priest
and people of Bethlehem.

RUTH.

Help me, O most gracious Father,
Wandering in a stranger land ;
Lead me in the path I've chosen,
Thou my friend and helper stand.

NAOMI.

In the hour of dark affliction,
When alone I seem to be ;
When I'm weary of my burden,
Keep me, Father, near to thee.

ALL.

Great hath been thy tender mercy,
Blessing, praise and love we bring ;
Thou art King and Priest forever,
Praise to thee we gladly sing.

HIGH PRIEST.

In each time of doubt and trouble,
Give me faith on thee to rest ;

RUTH, NAOMI, HIGH PRIEST AND HEAD
SERVANT.

Strengthen me in hours of trial,
Give me what thou seest best.

Ensemble.

He hath brought me safe through danger,
When perplex'd sweet comfort brings ;
Let me shout in songs triumphant,
Praises to the King of Kings !

Act II.

"And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech." RUTH, chap. i, v. 1, 2 and 3.

SCENE I.—*The Fields of Boaz.*

Reapers, Gleaners, Head Servant and Ruth.

GLEANERS.

The corn waves in furrows green,
The tall barley sheaves are seen
Rising where the reapers have been.
We rest from our toil awhile,
And each laugh or sing or smile,
Till the call is heard: oh! come, come
away!

HEAD SERVANT, REAPERS AND GLEANERS.

Tra la, la, la, la, la,
Come, oh come away;
Singing joyously our glad roundelay
Laughing merrily, ha, ha, ha!

RUTH.

The gleaners laugh merrily,
The reapers sing cheerily,
Everything is gladsome and gay;
We'll work then till set of sun,
The hour when our labor's done,
Always singing gaily; come, come, away!

ALL.

Working gladly all the sunny day,
Resting where the shadows play,
Peace and joy to ev'ry heart
The softened shades of eve impart.

RUTH.

Then when evening shadows softly creep,
Does the nightfall bring us refreshing
sleep.

To the meadows fresh in the morn
So cheerfully we work in ripening corn.

ALL.

The corn waves, etc.

SCENE II.—*Friendship.*

(Arrival of Boaz from Bethlehem. Ruth, Boaz, Head Servant, Reapers and Gleaners.)

BOAZ.

The Lord be with you!

ALL.

The Lord bless thee!

BOAZ.

Whose damsel is this?

HEAD SERVANT.

It is the Moabitish damsel
That came back with Naomi,
Out of the country of Moab;
And she said, Let me glean and gather
After the reapers among the sheaves.
So she came, and hath continued
Even from the morning until now.

BOAZ.

(*To Ruth.*)

Hearest thou not, my daughter,
Go not to glean in another field,
Neither go from hence,
But abide here fast by my maidens.

"Then she fell on her face and bowed herself to the ground."—RUTH, chap. ii, v. 10.

RUTH.

Why have I thus found favor
And grace in thine eyes
That thou shouldest take knowledge of
me,
Seeing I am a stranger?

BOAZ.

It hath fully been showed me
All that thou hast done to thy mother-
in-law

Since the death of thy husband,
And how thou hast left
Thy father and thy mother,
And the land of thy nativity,
And art come unto a people
Which thou knewest not heretofore.

BOAZ.

The Lord recompense thy work,
And a full reward be given thee
Of the Lord God of Israel,
Under whose wings thou'rt come to
trust.

RUTH.

Let me now find favor in thy sight, my
lord,
For that thou hast comforted me,
And for that thou hast spoken so friendly
Unto thine handmaid.

RUTH, BOAZ, HEAD SERVANT, REAPERS,
AND GLEANERS.

Blessed be the name of the Lord
Who hath not left $\left\{ \begin{smallmatrix} \text{me} \\ \text{thee} \end{smallmatrix} \right\}$ this day;
Ever-blessed be the name of the Lord.

SCENE III.—*Jealousy.*

Zuleika, afterward Near Kinsman, Merab and Prophetess.

ZULEIKA.

Ah! I'm not mistaken! Yes, 'tis she!
Here my husband soon will surely be!

(*Sees the Near Kinsman in the distance.*)

'Tis he!

SPOKEN.—“He shall never—I vow it (stamping her foot)—take this Moabitish woman for wife. Doth she not glean in the fields of Boaz, and is only an hand-maiden? Heaven forbid that he should do this thing and bring evil unto us. Here he comes now!”

NEAR KINSMAN.

Proud Boaz, whom I deeply hate,
My sure revenge doth now await;
To wed fair Ruth, my lord has planned,
But I shall claim the maiden's hand.

MERAB.

Like lord or prince he walketh now,
And all before his greatness bow;
If he hath riches, then in truth
'Tis fair that thou shouldst wed sweet
Ruth.

BOTH.

Our plans are laid with craft and skill,
And we shall surely work our will;
So we'll abide the fitting hour;
Then, Boaz, thou shalt feel our power.

PROPHETESS.

Nay! I've a message now for thee,
Thou workers of iniquity;
Thy flocks and herds destroyed shall be,
Unless repentance comes from thee!

ZULEIKA.

(*Aside.*)

Will he! will he? we shall see
Who will in this race winner be!

PROPHETESS.

(*To Near Kinsman.*)

Thy flocks and herds destroyed shall be,
Unless repentance comes from thee!

NEAR KINSMAN AND MERAB.

So we'll abide the fitting hour,
And, Boaz, thou shalt feel our power.

SCENE IV.—*Neglect.*

Zuleika, afterward the Prophetess.

ZULEIKA.

I love him still, tho' he forgets
I once was all to him;
To think he loves another now,
Has made my eyes grow dim.
'Tis hard to meet the careless glance
That speaks no tender thought;
He told me I was dearest, best—
But now he loves me not.

ZULEIKA AND PROPHETESS.

Though love may leave the faithless
heart,
Nor come again at call,
“'Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never loved at all.”

ZULEIKA.

I can not tell what hopes arise
To quickly fade away;
I can not tell what yearnings come
Throughout the livelong day.
I love him still, though he is cold,
With heart estranged from mine,
While ever does mine inmost soul
For true affection pine.

BOTH.

Though love may leave, etc.

SCENE V.—*Love.*

Ruth and Naomi.

The exterior of Naomi's house. A spinning-wheel standing in the porch. Ruth returns from gleaning.

“So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley. And she took it up, and went into the city; and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned.”—RUTH, chap. ii, v. 17 and 18.

RUTH.

Can it be the joy of loving
Makes my happy heart rebound;

Can it be my pulse is throbbing
With a love that's newly found?

NAOMI.
(*Musingly.*)

The day is past,
She's home at last.

RUTH.

Can it be the bliss that angels
In their happy spirits feel?
For within my life so lonely
Such a brightness seems to steal.

NAOMI.
(*Spinning.*)

Such a blessing,
Love unceasing!

(*Naomi stops the wheel and goes into the house,
and, as Ruth comes in sight of it, she puts her
gleanings down and advances toward it.*)

RUTH.

Can it be the joy is lasting!

RUTH.

That it will not vanish soon;
Oh! to leave me cold and cheerless,
While it gave the warmth of noon!
I have heard it that happy spirits
Love to sing the joy they feel;
Can it be their sweetest whispers
On the air around me steal?
Better than the pain of parting
With the sweetness in my breast,
Is a home within the valley
And a place of dreamless rest.
Can it be that I am dreaming
Only to awake e'er long,
Or is it the joy of loving
Seems to fill my heart with song?

NAOMI.
(*Spinning.*)

Where hast thou been to-day,
And where wroughtest thou?

RUTH.

The man's name with whom I wrought
To-day is Boaz!

NAOMI.

The man is one of our next kinsmen!
My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee,
That it may be well with thee.
Behold, he winnoweth barley

To-night in the threshing floor;
Wash thyself, therefore, and put thy
raiment upon thee,
And get thee down to the floor;
But make not thyself known unto the man
Until he shall have done eating and
drinking.

RUTH.

All thou sayest unto me I will do.

BOTH.

Boaz, good and noble kinsman,
(Ever blessed be his lot,)
Showeth kindness to the living,
And the dead forgetteth not!

SCENE VI.—*Discord.*

Merab, afterward Zuleika.

MERAB.

As the hour is drawing nearer
I must seek my master's face,
For he needeth help and counsel
As the evening comes apace.

ZULEIKA.

Stay! Where is my lord, thy master?

MERAB.

Perhaps he walketh at eventide.

ZULEIKA.

Speak! Whither hath he gone?

MERAB.

Be not angry with thy servant, for I am
an aged man. My lord is—

ZULEIKA.

Answer! Thou son of iniquity!

MERAB.

Hearken to my word, for thy servant is
feeble, and slow of speech; mine
eyes—

ZULEIKA.

Speak quickly! or as my soul liveth thy
punishment shall be great! Hath my
lord gone out after the Moabitish
woman?

MERAB.

Fair Zuleika, what's the matter?

ZULEIKA.

Oh! you need not seek to flatter!
Truly 'tis a pretty doing!

MERAB. *(Aside.)*

(Surely there's a storm a brewing.)

ZULEIKA.

Is he not such folly showing?

MERAB.

Truly I've no means of knowing!
Is it to my lord relating?

ZULEIKA.

'Tis the evil he's creating!
Is she not an humble gleaner?

MERAB.

I have never known nor seen her!

ZULEIKA.

Wilt thou counsel such a measure?

MERAB.

If it is my master's pleasure.

ZULEIKA.

I protest 'tis past all bearing,
Thou this wicked folly sharing.
Hopes of joy are ever shipwrecked.

MERAB. *(Aside.)*

Ah! my master's sadly henpecked!

ZULEIKA.

I love him still, though he forgets
I once was all to him;
To think he loves another now
Has made my eyes grow dim.
'Tis hard to meet the careless glance,
That speaks no tender thought;
He told me I was dearest, best,
But now he loves me not.

SCENE VII.—*The Threshing Floor of Boaz.*

BOAZ AND SERVANTS.

Joyously ho! so ho!
Joyously drink the new-made wine,
In plenty let it flow;
Every true friend and neighbor drink,
The pledge of friendship show.
Jolly good cheer to every one
Whether he reap or sow.
Fill, then, to plenty in the land,
And let the red wine flow!
Joyously ho! so ho!

Heartily, then, in new-made wine

We'll drink the vintage clear,
Pledging ourselves in every glass
Abiding friendship here.

Stand for the right, if need be fight,
As on through life we go;
Faith in each other's our maxim, boys,
So let the red wine flow!
Joyously ho! so ho!

"And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn."—RUTH, iii, v. 7.

CHORUS OF ANGELS.

From the unseen worlds of glory
We the gates of earth unclose;
Angels' feet upon the stairway
Wake no dreamer from repose.
Round the portal,
Watching, guarding,
Angels forms no shadow throws.

SCENE VIII.—*Duty.*

"And she went down unto the floor, and did all that her mother-in-law bade her."—RUTH, iii, v. 6.

RUTH.

'Tis midnight!
And the moon's pale rays
Illume the earth, now still;
Not so my heart, it wildly beats
And throbs against my will.
Israel's God! He whom I choose,
My humble prayer give heed;
The Orphan's Friend be Thou to me,
And help in time of need.
(A step is heard.)

Surely some one awakes,
Or perhaps an intruder. I must await!

SCENE IX.—*The Assassin.*

Near Kinsman, afterward Ruth and Boaz.

NEAR KINSMAN.

At last I have him!
He who hath stood 'tween me and
fortune.
Though kindred blood course through
his veins,
I will not, will not spare him.
Nay! nay! for insult and contumely
Repeated once too often,
His life shall now the forfeit pay,
I will with one fell blow avenge me!

RUTH.

Hold !

BOAZ.

Kinsman ! why seeks't my life ?

NEAR KINSMAN.

Pardon !

RUTH.

(To Boaz.)

My lord ! restrain the avenging arm,
 To murder be not driven ;
 As thou to others mercy show,
 So mercy's shown from heaven !

NEAR KINSMAN.

(To Boaz.)

My lord ! restrain the avenging arm
 My soul with hate was riven
 Ah ! mercy show,
 And pardon grant me, Heaven !

SCENE X.—*Repentance.*

Finale to Act II.

Boaz, Near Kinsman and Ruth.

BOAZ.

(To Ruth.)

'Tis to thy gentle power
 My stronger will shall bow.

(To Near Kinsman.)

Then swear before my dagger's sheathed,
 Aye ! swear in honest truth,
 That on the morrow at the gate,
 Thou'lt yield the hand of Ruth.

NEAR KINSMAN.

(To Boaz.)

First, thy pardon, kinsman, I would ask,
 My life is in thy hand ;
 For mercy, I will free the maid,
 And 'fore the Elders stand.
 With thee a cov'nant I will make ;
 Oh spare, for mercy's sake !

RUTH.

(To Boaz.)

He pardon asks thee. I pray thee grant
 it !

A pledge of silence now be given ;
 As ye to others mercy show
 So mercy's shown from heaven !

BOAZ.

(To Ruth.)

To thy sweet prayer I grant it !

RUTH.

Joy ! joy ! he grants it !

BOAZ.

(To Near Kinsman.)

Arise ! may heaven forgive thee !

NEAR KINSMAN.

(To Boaz.)

I thank thee for thy mercy !

RUTH.

(To Boaz.)

In deeds of kindly pity,
 Thou'st ever noblest, best ;
 He who forgives his brother,
 In sight of Heaven is blest.

BOAZ.

(To Ruth.)

His claim our brother forfeits,
 The next of kin I stand ;
 Then maid be mine forever,
 Oh take my heart and hand.

NEAR KINSMAN.

(To Ruth.)

With thoughts of thee to strengthen,
 I'll act a nobler part,
 To thee I dare not offer
 A guilty, craven heart.

Ensemble.

RUTH.

(To Boaz.)

It is with joy unbroken
 I hear thee tell of this ;
 When heart to heart hath spoken
 It gives a thrill of bliss.

BOAZ.

(To Ruth.)

My heart was full of sadness,
 I wished thy joys were mine ;
 But now 'tis purest gladness
 To clasp thy hand in mine.

NEAR KINSMAN.

(To Boaz.)

I thank thee for thy mercy
 That's spared a life like mine ;
 Thy gen'rous deed hath shown me
 That noble manhood's thine.

CHORUS.

To-night this place he entered
 With evil thoughts intent;
 Kind Heaven has interposed,
 And surely he'll repent.

Act III.

SCENE I.—*The Bargain. Gate of Bethlehem.*

Boaz, Near Kinsman, Merab, Elders and Citizens of Bethlehem.

(Boaz being entrusted with the sale of Naomi's land, assembles the people and takes ten of the Elders to decide the right of purchase, the right involving the disposal of the hand of Ruth.) RUTH, iv, v. 1 to 10.

BOAZ.

(To Near Kinsman.)

Turn aside, till we have spoken,
 Tarry for a moment here!

NEAR KINSMAN.

While my lord a word is speaking,
 I thy servant will draw near.

BOAZ.

(To Elders.)

Sit ye down and judge this matter;
 Let the elders wisdom bring,
 For it is the law of Moses
 That ye witness to this thing.
 Know, Naomi sells a portion
 Of her husband's goodly land;
 Buy of her, or, if thou wilt not,
 Tell me, for the next I stand.

NEAR KINSMAN.

(To People.)

It is just that I, her kindred,
 Should possess Naomi's field:
 Then will I redeem our brother—
 Let the cov'nant here be sealed.

NEAR KINSMAN, MERAB, ELDERS AND PEOPLE.

It is just that { I redeem } it;
 { he redeems }
 Let the cov'nant here be sealed.

BOAZ.

In the day thou buy'st her portion
 That belongeth to her kin,

Thou must buy of Mahlon's widow,
 And the hand of Ruth must win!

BOAZ AND PEOPLE.

(To Near Kinsman.)

Thou must buy of Mahlon's widow,
 And the hand of Ruth must win!

NEAR KINSMAN.

(To Boaz.)

Then, mine own I may not injure,
 Lest it causeth ill and strife;
 Buy the land for thy possession,
 Also Ruth to be thy wife!

(Ensemble.)

MERAB, ELDERS AND PEOPLE.

Let the Elders and the people
 Witness this day, for the truth;
 Boaz buys Naomi's portion,
 And he wins the hand of Ruth.

BOAZ.

Let the Elders bear me witness
 That this day I speak the truth;
 I have bought Naomi's portion,
 And have won the hand of Ruth.

NEAR KINSMAN.

I have sought the widow's portion,
 And despised the orphan's need;
 I repent of this, my doing;
 I have sinned indeed.

SCENE II.—*The Vision.*

Time, Night. Ruth and Naomi on the house-top.

NAOMI.

What aileth thee, my daughter,
 And why is thy rest disturbed?

RUTH.

"In visions of the night,
 When deep sleep falleth upon man,
 A spirit passed before my face;
 It stood still, but I could not discern the
 form thereof;
 An image was before mine eyes,
 And I heard a voice, saying—"

NAOMI.

What said the spirit unto thee, my daughter?

RUTH.

"There shall come forth a rod
 Out of the stem of Jesse,

And a branch shall grow out of its roots,
And in that day there shall be a root of
Jesse
Which shall stand for an ensign
To the people;
To it shall the Gentiles seek,
And his rest shall be glorious."

SCENE III.—*The Epithalamium.*

COMPANION MAIDENS OF RUTH.

Soon with woman's fond devotion
Shall thy loving troth be sealed;
Life for thee is dawning brightly,
Lovely gleaner of the field.
Slumber softly on thy pillow,
Till the distant echo tells
To each ear the sweet old story
Of the merry bridal bells!
Echo tells
Of the bells,
The merry bridal bells!
May thy days be every sunny
As the happy hours of spring;
Bluest skies that shine above thee,
Cloud and tempest never bring.
Slumber softly on thy pillow,
As the fading starlight tells
Of the dawning in the eastward,
'Tis the morn of marriage bells!

RUTH AND NAOMI.

(*Ensemble.*)

Sleep hath fled, but sweet the waking,
As the fading starlight tells
Of the dawning in the eastward,
And the morn of marriage bells!
Hear the bells!
Marriage bells!
The merry marriage bells!

SCENE IV.—*Anticipation.*

BOAZ.

The nightingale sings 'neath the stars,
No sound of day her love-song mars.
Be still, fond heart,
Delicious tho' thy dreamings be:
Precious, how precious
Is the thought of one beloved!
What joy! What ecstasy!
My heart felt no thrill of emotion,
Nor dreamed of a rapture like this.

How lonely was life, till her presence
Had brought me an Eden of bliss.
Come quickly! bright hour on the mor-
row,
Sweet hour I am longing to see,
For then I shall call thee mine own love,
But now I am dreaming of thee;
Dreaming, yes,
Dreaming of thee!
I look to the eastward for morning;
I whisper: Oh, night pass away;
I long for the star of the twilight
That heralds the dawn of the day.
Oh! hasten bright hour on the morrow,
Sweet hour I am longing to see; —
For then I shall call thee mine own love,
But now I am dreaming of thee:
Dreaming, yes,
Dreaming of thee!

SCENE V.—*The Wedding.*

Finale to Act III.

Exterior of the house of Boaz. Time, night. Herald, afterwards Female relatives of the bridegroom. Bridal procession—Ruth with companions and Boaz with friends. Their arrival and invitation to the marriage supper.

MAIDENS.

Wish now for the gentle bride,
Peaceful, holy, happy hours;
Time to bring no wearing grief,
Life to pass like summer flowers.
Hope, still on her pathway shine,
Faithful, loving, trusting one;
Death, tear not her idols down,
Sweet her rest when work is done.

MAIDENS.

Behold the bridegroom cometh!

BRIDAL PROCESSION.

(*In the distance.*)

Beauteous Ruth; Gem of light!
Hail! All hail!

(*Voices nearer.*)

Boaz, strong in the right!
Hail! All hail!

(*Arrive in sight.*)

Joy shall attend on thee,
Fairest, dearest, sweetest bride;
Heaven kindly sends to thee
Rest, for thou wert tried.
Joy now we wish to thee,
Brightest, happiest, longest life,

Long live to enjoy true love,
Free from toil and strife.
Gentle daughter, gem of truth,
Toiling in thy sunny youth;
Heeding not the burning ray,
Winning bread for her each day.

(To Naomi—Ruth, Boaz and Chorus.)

Gentle mother, tried and true,
Weary pilgrim battling through;
Fortune false to thee may prove,
Naught is sweet as changeless love.

ALL.

(Except Ruth and Boaz. Ensemble.)

Hail, to the bridegroom!
Hail, to the bride!

BOAZ.

Love still we bear to thee,
Faithful, loving, loyal friends;
She kindly heareth thee,
To each word attends.

RUTH.

Joy will it be to me,
Purest, sweetest, pleasure yields;
Yet bidding lowly ones,
Glean within the fields.

ALL.

Joy shall attend on thee, etc.

BOAZ.

(To head servant.)

Go: prepare the supper, so that
We may make merry with our friends!

HEAD SERVANT.

It shall be as my lord hath spoken.

RUTH, NAOMI, BOAZ AND NEAR KINSMAN.

The rose in its beauty must fade,
And Autumn to Summer is near;
But kindness will hallow our youth,
In sadness will strengthen and cheer.
The autumn leaf falls from the stem,
The summer flower fadeth away;

But kind words will bloom in the heart,
As fresh as young violets in May.
We're now in the spring-time of life,
And youth in its freshness is here:
Then let us be loving and true,
Ere age with its frosts draweth near.
There's a beautiful rest by-and-by,
For those who have pitied the wrong;
There's a beautiful strain that they sing,
And love is the theme of that song.

HEAD SERVANT.

Behold, thy friends which are bidden
are in waiting! the supper is prepared,
come! for all things are ready!

RUTH.

Where dearest friends will gather round,
Nor past the lintel roam;
Where heart meets heart in tender love,
Is home, sweet home.

BOAZ.

Where one bright presence makes our
bliss,
And purest pleasures come,
As hand in hand through life we walk,
Is home, sweet home.

ALL.

Home, home, sweet, sweet home;

RUTH.

Where heart meets heart in tender love,

BOAZ.

As hand in hand through life we walk,

NAOMI.

Where weary age may rest content,

NEAR KINSMAN.

Where hand meets hand in friendly
grasp,

PROPHETESS, HIGH PRIEST, MERAB.

Where grateful hearts unite in thanks,

HEAD SERVANT AND CHORUS—ALL.

Is home, sweet home!

Historical Customs in the Time of Ruth.

GLEANING.—A practice established by law, and intended to make provision for the poorer classes of the people.

BARLEY HARVEST, commencing in April, ended in the first part of June, and was followed by the season of fruits. The heat at this time was so intense that the roofs of houses were commonly used for sleeping purposes.

SALUTATIONS were generally of a religious character, expressing prayers for the blessing of God on those to whom they were spoken.

SPINNING and weaving were the business of women, and embroidery and needle-work were carried to great perfection.

THE THRESHING FLOOR was in the field itself, and was merely an open space where the sheaves were thrown together in loose heaps, ready for threshing, the ground being leveled by a roller till it was quite hard and smooth.

WINE.—There was in use a sort of weak wine or vinegar commonly drank by laborers, and this was given by Boaz to his servants at the harvest feast.

SPREADING THE SKIRT was a custom which denoted protection and encouragement, and was a token of high esteem.

THE GATE of the city was an important place. A considerable space was left unoccupied about it, and here was the seat of justice, where legal business was transacted. It was a place of general resort.

MAKING A BARGAIN.—The custom of taking off the shoe and handing it to the other party concerned, signified the closing of the bargain.

MARRIAGE LAW.—There was a law to this effect, that the brother or nearest living male relative should marry the deceased brother's widow. A departure from this law was allowable where an unwillingness was felt by either party.

EPITHALAMIUM.—The night previous to the wedding, the companion maidens of the bride assembled before the door of the house, and sung the nuptial ode of congratulation.

HOUSE TOP.—The roofs of Eastern houses are flat, and surrounded on the outside with a low wall. On such roofs a little grass will sometimes spring up, but it soon withers away under the heat of the sun. The roof has always been used as a place of retirement, and it is common to walk there in the evening to enjoy the cool breeze, while in summer persons often sleep under the broad arch of Heaven.

Ruth is generally supposed to have been quite young, and Boaz probably in middle life.

WEDDING FESTIVITIES.—These were held at the residence of the bride's parents, and lasted from three to seven days. The young people, friends of each, during this time amused themselves in various ways, but held no communication with each other. At the close of the festivities, both parties marched in procession after nightfall, by torchlight, to the house of the bridegroom, with songs and the music of instruments. In the meantime, another company was waiting at the bridegroom's house, ready at the first notice of their approach to go forth to meet them, and on the arrival of the bridal party, all partook of the marriage supper.

1. <i>a.</i> Solos and Chorus.....	{ Boaz, Nr. Kinsman, Merab, Elders and People }	{ <i>Turn aside.</i>
<i>b.</i> Ensemble.....	{ Boaz, Nr. Kinsman, Merab, Elders and People }	{ <i>Let the Elders.</i>
2. Cavatina	Ruth.....	<i>In visions.</i> [ion.
3. <i>a.</i> Female Chorus	Companions of Ruth	<i>Soon with woman's fond devo-</i>
<i>b.</i> Ensemble	Ruth, Naomi and Chorus.....	<i>Sleep hath fled.</i>
4. <i>a.</i> Recitando	Boaz.....	<i>The nightingale sings.</i>
<i>b.</i> Aria	Boaz.....	<i>My heart felt.</i>
5. Finale to Act III.		
<i>a.</i> Female Chorus	Herald, Chorus of Maidens.....	<i>Wish now for the gentle bride.</i>
<i>b.</i> Full Chorus	All, except Ruth and Boaz	<i>Joy shall attend.</i>
<i>c.</i> Quartet	Ruth, Naomi, Boaz and Near Kinsman	<i>The rose in its beauty.</i>
<i>d.</i> Solos	Ruth and Boaz.....	<i>Where dearest friends.</i>
<i>e.</i> Ensemble	All.....	<i>Home, Sweet Home.</i>



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